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Atari Online News, Etc.
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-* Net Neutrality Rules for Fair Access Wins! *-

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->From the Editor's Keyboard "Saying it like it is!"
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The recent shootings in Orlando is another example that shows that we're not doing enough to combat terrorism. Yes, while it appears that this was an attack by a "lone wolf" fanatic, he was apparently fascinated with ISIS-related activities; and, he made calls to the police heralding ISIS and the Boston Marathon bombers.

Even though he toned-down his comments, I believe John McCain is correct in holding Obama partially responsible for the attacks in Florida. Obama should have done more to dismantle ISIS in its infancy; and should be doing more now. Instead. it's more of his usual rhetoric about tougher gun control.

Yes, this shooter purchased an assult rifle legally. So much for the FBI doing its job effectively. The shooter had a past history that should have raised tons of red flags when the background check was being performed, but there weren't any. But the politicians will once again renew gun control issues rather than focus on the real problem - terrorism.

Do I believe that assault-like weapons should be available to the general public? Part of me says no, but another says yes. As a gun owner with all of the required permits, I can legally purchase such a weapon. The way in which there's no telling where another terrorist attack might occur, I'm almost tempted to consider making such a purchase for better protection for myself and family! September 11th changed our world forever; America is no longer the safe haven that we all thought it to be.

Until next time...

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FireBee News Update

By Fred Horvat

Not much happened this week with the FireBee. I did start fresh

yet again with EasyMiNT 1.90 on the FireBee with DHCP selected. Selecting DHCP instead of Manual Networking Configuration the installation will finish without losing USB. If selecting Manual Networking Settings I will lose USB during the installation. Very strange indeed and I currently do not have the FireBee on the USB KVM so that is not the culprit. Anyways that is all that I did this week. Next step is to get the Networking Configuration program that is automatically run during the first boot up of the FireBee. I will run the tool and try selecting DHCP and see if that fixes my networking issues. If not I will then select Manual Settings and see if that happens to correct the networking issues. Hopefully running this tool will correct the problem.

Until next time.

AHCC v5.4

By Henk Robbers

There is a new version available on my home page (see sig).

Changes:

```
June 6 2016
   v5.4
   Compiler:
     Fixed a bug in register health analysis where in certain
       rare circumstances too many operations were discarded.
   Shell: (not AHCCST)
     New menu item: Project-->PRJ from folder.
     Produce a skeleton project file from file names in a
     given folder. (only 1 deep).
     Usefull for constructing new project files for AHCC.
   Editor:
     Tile windows when started with 2 previous opened files.
     Fixed a bug where ^2 could loose sync when searching for
       next unequal lines.

--
Groeten; Regards.
Henk Robbers. http://members.chello.nl/h.robbers
Interactive disassembler: Digger;  http://digger.atari.org
A Home Cooked C compiler:   AHCC;  http://ahcc.atari.org
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->In This Week’s Gaming Section - Microsoft Just Unveiled The Next Xbox and It s A Monster!
  """""""""""""""""""""""""""""   9 Reasons Why The Xbox One S Is Better Than T he Original!
                                   Atari Founder Nolan Bushnell Gives Keynote!

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->A-ONE’s Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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Microsoft Just Unveiled The Next Xbox and It s A Monster

We weren t sure we d see it at Microsoft s E3 presser, but the company s one more thing turns out to be the long-rumored Project Scorpio. It s officially the next Xbox, and it sounds like a beast. Call it Microsoft s mic drop to Sony, whose PlayStation conference airs later tonight.

Xbox honcho Phil Spencer dropped the bomb as the show closed, teasing a console with 8 CPU cores, 320 GB per second of memory bandwidth and 6 teraflops of GPU power. By contrast, the PlayStation 4 boasts 1.84 teraflops, while the Xbox One has just 1.31. Industry bigwigs quoted in the reel called it The most powerful graphics processor in a game console to date, The highest quality [uncompressed] pixels anyone s seen and The We heard you console.’

Calling it a monster, Spencer says it s meant to facilitate true 4K resolution gaming, high-fidelity virtual reality, and reassured that all future games will play on all three Xbox consoles. The company announced the Xbox One S, a slimline version of the original Xbox One earlier in the show.

Looks for it next year, and Spencer said Microsoft announced it today to give developers and partners time to take advantage of the capability now.

9 Reasons Why The Xbox One S Is Better Than The Original

Microsoft cut straight to the chase at its E3 press conference, officially announcing the Xbox One S the moment the event began. (It had leaked the previous weekend.) As both Sony and Microsoft have done with previous game consoles, the One S isn’t a "next-gen" successor to the Xbox One. Instead, it’s a smaller version that corrects many of the mistakes of the big, brutish Xbox that first debuted in November 2013 - and adds some notable new features, too.

In fact, while we haven’t spent any real time with the Xbox One S (it doesn’t become available until August), the photos and the spec sheet point to a product that’s a hands-down improvement on its predecessor.

Among the most notable:

Better pricing (eventually)

The Xbox One S will start at just $299 in the US, but that 500GB model won’t be coming till later this year. In the meantime you can get the 2-terabyte launch edition model for $399, £350 or AU$549 in late August. A third 1TB model will also be available for $349 in the US. Note, however, that the price of the existing Xbox One model has already been cut to as low as $279.

The new One S comes in at 40 percent smaller than the original One, which is a full-on beast of a box. That should put it much closer to the slim enclosure of the PlayStation 4 - and free up quite a bit of space in your home entertainment center. It even includes a vertical stand in the box, if you’d prefer to mount it vertically.

In addition to being physically gigantic, the original Xbox One also had an internal power brick the size of a Buick. The One S, however, is following the lead of the PS4 and going with an internal power supply.

The top-of-the-line Xbox One S will have 2TB of storage. That’s double the capacity of the current top-end Xbox and PS4, and plenty of storage for all of your games.

Expect improved video on the Xbox One S, with support for 4K (3,820x2,160-pixel) resolution and high-dynamic range (HDR). (Just note that 4K support is reserved for video, not games.) That means - on compatible titles and with compatible TVs - you can expect colors to be more vibrant and blacks to be darker.

That 4K and HDR support isn’t just for Netflix and Amazon streams: The Xbox One S will also play those new, top-of-the-line 4K Blu-ray discs, too. So it should be able to do everything that players such as the Samsung UBD-K8500 do for the same price or less - in addition to playing great games.
Controls other devices via an IR blaster

Microsoft dumped the Kinect motion sensor from the Xbox One package long ago, which lowered the price by $150. The Kinect remains an optional add-on for the One S - its absence of a dedicated port means you’ll need a USB adapter - but the new console includes a Kinect feature built-in: An IR blaster can control your TV and cable box like a universal remote.

The One S overhaul doesn’t stop with the console, as the controller is getting a refresh, too. This variant of the wireless controller has a new textured grip and better range. Even better, it adds Bluetooth wireless, in addition to Xbox’s proprietary wireless control scheme, which will allow you to use it with Bluetooth-ready PCs and tablets (and maybe phones?) without needing Microsoft’s annoying USB dongle. Read our full hands-on: The new Xbox Wireless Controller offers more than just custom colors.

With the exception of needing the adapter if you’re adding a Kinect sensor, the One S still does everything the current Xbox One can, and plays all of the same games. It also includes all of the positive software improvements Microsoft has made over the past few years, including the redesigned interface, support for the Cortana digital assistant, compatibility with the Windows

Store, backwards compatibility with a growing list of Xbox 360 games and more.

The Xbox One S is available for preorder at the Microsoft Store in the US, UK and Australia, but keep a couple of caveats in mind before you whip out your credit card. First off, Microsoft has already confirmed that a supercharged version of the Xbox One, dubbed Project Scorpio, will be hitting in late 2017 with support for gaming at 4K resolutions and VR add-ons. And Sony is also getting into the console upgrade game in the near future with its PS4 Neo, which will also amp up its 4K video chops.

And, of course, there's always Nintendo, which will be releasing its Nintendo NX console in March 2017.

So while the Xbox One S looks great, just know that a raft of other new and improved game consoles will be hot on its heels.

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->A-ONE Gaming Online - Online Users Growl & Purr!
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Atari Founder Nolan Bushnell Gives Keynote on the Ups and Downs of Our Digital Present (and Future)

Entrepreneur Nolan Bushnell, the founder Atari Inc. and Chuck E. Cheese's, delivered the keynote at the newly revamped NXNE Future Land, Interactive Conference in Toronto this week.

"We have to choose between protection of the status quo and embrace of the future," Bushnell told the theatre of gamers and musicians at Ryerson University's Ted Rogers School of Management. "The future has no constituency. You believe people are going to sit by, and governments are going to sit by, and see 40 percent of the work force displaced by technology?

"The countries that embrace the future will survive and do well, and those that restrict [technology] will fail within 20 years. And it's a problem because we have to create a clear vision of what the future could be like."

Bushnell, whose company created the groundbreaking arcade video game Pong, is currently writing his own immersive experience, Pong The Musical (with Rodgers and Hammerstein taking care of the music) slated to open next fall in Los Angeles.

His kids are also involved in various ventures, including Dip ("think of it as Airbnb for party places, like hotel pools") to Polycade (a video game machine with 300 retro games) and Two Bi Circus, focused on "big experiential games."

"In today's world you can find more and more about immersion,"

Bushnell said. "What is immersion? Well VR is immersion. But real life in a future scheme construct is immersion as well."

At the end of his presentation, Billboard asked how the record and live music industry could utilize some of these ideas and technologies for the future?

"The performing arts - music, acting - is at an interesting cross roads because there are fans and fan-base marketing and some of those things. I think that VR is, right now, in the whiz-bang phase, where it's so different that it hasn't settled down to being a true communication medium for things like new bands or new music or musical acts," Bushnell said. "In VR, I'm not sure that the visceral excitement of standing in the mosh pit, passing around people, is going to be nearly as much fun as when you do it yourself.

"I think that the technology both enables and destroys. There are so many more artists that are being heard today, but yet the amount of money that can be monetized through CD sales and even iTunes sales; you look at the music business and what was it, 20 percent of it was at its peak, and I see it as probably further disintermediation. The big brands are giving way to the small brands and I think that's going to continue."

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

'Net Neutrality' Rules for Fair Internet Access Win in Court

A federal appeals court on Tuesday upheld the government's "net neutrality" rules, preserving regulations that force internet providers such as Comcast and AT&T to treat all online traffic everything from Netflix and cat videos to games and downloads equally.

The 2-1 ruling is a sweeping victory for the Obama administration and the consumer groups and internet companies that have pushed net neutrality for years. The Federal Communications Commission's rules block internet service providers from favoring their own services and disadvantaging others; blocking other sites and apps; and creating "fast lanes" for video and other data services that pay for the privilege.

On technical grounds, the ruling upholds the FCC's authority to regulate broadband service as a utility, much like phone service, and to forbid what it considers unreasonable practices. It applies equally to wired broadband providers like cable companies and mobile ones such as Verizon.

The net neutrality rules have been in effect since June, and the court's decision isn't going to change how the internet works tomorrow. But the FCC has already been taking some steps that would change how broadband providers act. The ruling could pave the way for tougher restrictions on cable and phone companies that affect what services they offer, which consumer data they can use and how, and what they can charge.

The providers who filed the lawsuit say they'll appeal.

"This decision is huge for the FCC's authority," said Marvin Ammori, a longtime net-neutrality advocate. "We won big on everything." That sets the stage for what Ammori and several analysts see as the next big battle. That will likely involve "zero rating" the practice of exempting preferred video services from customer data caps.

Comcast, for example, lets you can watch video at home with its Stream service with no danger of bumping against your data cap (if you have one). T-Mobile's Binge On program lets you watch any video you want from Netflix and many other providers without counting it as data use. Net-neutrality advocates say these types of practices are unfair and tilt the market toward certain favored providers.

Other consequences are more difficult to gauge. Christopher Yoo, a professor of law, engineering and communications at the University of Pennsylvania, said the ruling could mean higher prices for some services, while providers might drop others altogether.

"I think everyone has to be shocked at the magnitude of the FCC victory," said MoffettNathanson analyst Craig Moffett. But it was a long time coming.

The U.S. Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit had previously struck down similar rules from the FCC twice although at the time the FCC based them on a different and more tenuous claim of legal authority.

The FCC shifted tactics and moved to treat broadband as a utility after President Barack Obama publicly urged the commission to protect consumers by doing so. Providers like Comcast, Verizon and AT&T said the resulting rules threaten innovation and undermine investment in broadband infrastructure.

The telecom industry made its case mainly on technical grounds. It argued that broadband is an "information service" and not a utility, because providers offer both internet access and services such as email. Under current law, information services are also exempt from net-neutrality regulation.

But the same court ruled that the FCC was justified in reclassifying broadband as a telecom utility because consumers see broadband as a pipe for internet service and a way to get online to use "third-party" services like Gmail and Netflix.

"Given the tremendous impact third-party internet content has had on our society, it would be hard to deny its dominance in the broadband experience," Judges David Tatel and Sri Srinivasan wrote

in a 115-page majority opinion that denied all challenges to the rules.

"Over the past two decades, this content has transformed nearly every aspect of our lives, from profound actions like choosing a leader, building a career, and falling in love to more quotidian ones like hailing a cab and watching a movie," the judges said. "The same assuredly cannot be said for broadband providers' own add-on applications."

In a lengthy dissent, Judge Stephen Williams wrote that the FCC "fails to offer a reasoned basis" for its view that giving preferential treatment to customers who pay for faster service is a problem. By regulating broadband service like "natural monopolies," Williams said the FCC provides "little economic space for new firms seeking market entry or relatively small firms seeking expansion through innovations."

Tatel and Srinivasan were appointed by Democratic presidents Bill Clinton and Barack Obama, respectively. Williams was appointed by Ronald Reagan.

Opponents of the ruling are already calling on Congress to restrict its reach, but experts say it's unlikely such a law would pass before the election.

"We have always expected this issue to be decided by the Supreme Court, and we look forward to participating in that appeal," said David McAtee, AT&T senior executive vice president and general counsel, in a statement posted on the company's website.

FCC Chairman Tom Wheeler praised the ruling as an affirmation of the government's power to keep the internet open for all consumers.

"After a decade of debate and legal battles, today's ruling affirms the commission's ability to enforce the strongest possible internet protections both on fixed and mobile networks that will ensure the internet remains open, now and in the future," Wheeler said.

Big Telecom Lost in Court, But An Open Internet Won. So Did You.

A critical court ruling on Tuesday upheld long-contested rules that stop your internet provider from blocking or slowing sites net neutrality, in fewer words.

The ruling by the US Court of Appeals for the DC Circuit upholding the Federal Communications Commission s net-neutrality rules is a weighty read, but for Big Telecom it boils down to eight words: You get nothing! You lose! Good day, sir!

This means the FCC s regulations stopping your internet provider and wireless carrier from blocking or slowing your access to a legal site, service, or app or charging one for priority delivery live on.

The argument over net neutrality does, too. But the odds of winning it got a lot worse for opponents of the FCC s regulations and the general idea of stopping your internet providers from tampering with your connection to the online world.

Your ISP can still charge more for faster downloads, impose data caps and maybe even exempt some services from those limits. But first it must give you the internet, the whole internet and nothing but the internet. And on the other end of the connection, some new online startup doesn t have to worry about being asked to pay extra to reach you.

The conclusion of the 115-page ruling by Judges David S. Tatel and Sri Srinivasan in United States Telecom Association, et al., v. Federal Communications Commission shouldn t have surprised anybody who read the same court s January 2014 opinion that rejected earlier, weaker net-neutrality rules.

In that case brought by Verizon (VZ), the court essentially said that if the commission wanted to regulate internet providers as common carriers a legal status that s long governed telephone utilities but also railroads and taxis it had to label them accordingly.

Which, in turn, would require the FCC to hit the Undo button on decisions a decade earlier to classify broadband providers as information services, not the simpler definition of telecommunications services that happens to match the usual understanding of what ISPs do connect you to the internet.

After a prolonged public outcry over the possibility of the FCC caving remember comedian John Oliver comparing FCC chair Tom Wheeler to a dingo? the commission took the court s hint. In February of 2015, it put wired and wireless broadband providers back in the utility-esque common-carrier bucket and then adopted net-neutrality rules.

Various telecom companies and organizations promptly sued to overturn those rules, and we now have the court s word.

This 2-1 ruling (Tatel and Srinivasan s colleague Judge Stephen F. Williams filed a dissent) focuses on the difference between information and telecommunications services as defined in the Telecommunications Act of 1996.

The former most closely describes AOL and other pioneering online services, which bundled not just a connection but software and services.

The latter matches today s internet access, where you pay for the connection and then go to other sites like, perhaps, today s Aol, a division of Verizon that runs sites like Engadget and TechCrunch (and tends to a dwindling audience of dial-up users).

Internet providers may not appreciate being defined as dumb pipes, but the definition fits. They haven t seriously tried to offer something like an information service since the 2001 demise of cable service Excite@Home.

How can the FCC make that call? Because, the judges wrote, the

Supreme Court said so in a 2005 case. That might not matter had Congress since labeled ISPs as information services but it hasn t. And a 1984 Supreme Court ruling lets regulatory agencies like the FCC make their own reasoned calls in the absence of Congressional direction.

One party to the just-decided lawsuit, AT&T (T), is already vowing to appeal this case to the Supreme Court, while others have not gone beyond moping about its unfairness.

Continuing this strategy of relentless litigation might not be smart. The court s ruling stands on those two Supreme Court precedents and Williams dissent accepts that the FCC worked within the outlines of the Telecommunications Act, while then faulting its logic.

Besides, appealing to the highest court in the land would mean a few more years of net-neutrality rules remaining intact.

While Congress could technically vote tomorrow to revise the Telecommunications Act, t hasn t been able to do any such rewrite in over 20 years.

To be sure, an anti-net-neutrality candidate namely, Donald Trump could win the 2016 presidential election and then appoint FCC commissioners who would axe the net-neutrality rules.

But while Trump opposes it he called it a top down power grab in a 2014 tweet he s also widely loathed outside his Republican primary base.

Hillary Clinton, meanwhile, applauded the ruling in a tweet that called it a big win for consumers, innovation, and freedom of expression on the internet.

But the larger problem here is that fighting net neutrality looks like a political loser.

It requires believing promises of future online media services that couldn t survive without paid prioritization over a documented history of large internet providers demanding that real online media services like Netflix pay for the data used by their own customers.

(Internet providers may yet all wind up giving up on improving their services because net neutrality eats into their profits, but the evidence for that remains thin.)

Net neutrality often comes with a side order of shrill extremism denouncing it as regulating the Internet even though it doesn t limit what you do on the Internet if not outright Marxism.

And it not only requires taking the side of giant corporations, it demands standing up for cable and phone companies in particular, some of the less-liked firms in America. Are 2016 s candidates ready to nail their colors to the mast for all that? If so, I have two more words: good luck.

Hacker Floods ISIS-related Twitters with Pro-LGBT Messages, Porn

A hacker identifying with the group Anonymous has been trolling ISIS-related Twitter accounts, flooding them with explicit gay porn and rainbow flags, and sending fake "coming out" Tweets from users who support the terrorist group.

Following suggestions that the mass shooting in Orlando was inspired by ISIS, a self-identified Anonymous hacker who goes by the name WauchulaGhost took control of what had been pro-ISIS accounts.

"These attacks are getting too close to home," the hacker, who didn't share any identifying information, told NBC News in an email interview. "Social media isn't doing enough to keep this virus off the internet. It was just a little something to let all know there are people here willing to stand up and defend those who can not."

For its part, Twitter has cracked down on suspected terrorism-related profiles. Last year it suspended over 125,000 accounts, after widespread criticism over the platform's role as an enabler in the dissemination of ISIS propaganda.

WauchulaGhost's recent hacks seem to have been inspired by a segment on the Kyle Kulinski radio talk show "Secular Talk," in which the eponymous host applauds Anonymous' hacks earlier this week. In those attacks, the hacktivist group flooded ISIS-related Twitter accounts with images of pornography and changed some users' avatars into "I Heart Porn" graphics. Kulinski suggested on his show that such messages might be more effective if they were gay porn.

"Love it bro, you just gave me an idea and that's not usually good, lulz," responded WauchulaGhost on his Twitter account. Shortly afterwards, he replaced messages of support for the Orlando shooter with gay pride tweets such as "I'm gay and I'm proud," altered the ISIS flag into a NSFW goat-related graphic, and peppered the profiles with graphic gay sex videos.

As for the ease with which he accomplished these hacks, WauchulaGhost said, "Once I target an account, I can be in it within 60 seconds." He told NBC News that even though ISIS groups had "stepped up their #OpSec," they "know how to Google rather well, but that's it."

Twitter said in a statement that it "condemn(s) the use of Twitter to promote terrorism, and the Twitter Rules make it clear that this type of behavior, or any violent threat, is not permitted on our service."

Spam King, Who Defied Nearly $1 Billion in Default Judgments, Sentenced to 2.5 Years

A Las Vegas man known as the "Spam King" was sentenced Monday to 2.5 years in federal prison. He pleaded guilty last year to one count of fraud.

The federal judge in San Jose, California also ordered Sanford Wallace to pay over $310,000 in restitution.

Prosecutors wrote that by his own admission, Wallace executed "a scheme from approximately November 2008 through March 2009 to send spam messages to Facebook users that compromised approximately 500,000 legitimate Facebook accounts, and resulted in over 27 million spam messages being sent through Facebook s servers."

Wallace lost civil suits from MySpace and Facebook, among others, and was hit with nearly a total of $1 billion in outstanding default judgments, for which they have been unable to collect. In 2011, he was finally hit with criminal charges.

As prosecutors wrote in their pre-sentencing memorandum, asking the judge to impose a three-year sentence:

> The defendant s history demonstrates that he has yet to suffer a consequence other than a default judgment that cannot be collected - for his spamming activities. A sentence of 36 months imprisonment will impress upon the defendant the seriousness of his actions and deter him from engaging in similar conduct again.

There s A Quick and Easy Way To Be More Secure Online

You probably think your social media, email and online banking accounts are pretty secure. After all, you use different complex passwords for each and never log into them from public computers. Yeah, your online accounts are locked down tighter than Fort Knox.

Except they re not.

With a little bit of social engineering, an experienced hacker could get the passwords for your online accounts in no time. And let s face it, if SplashData s annual list of most popular passwords is any indication, your complex passwords are probably nothing better than 123456 and qwerty.

But there s a quick and easy way to significantly increase your online security: two-factor authentication. Two-factor, sometimes called two-step, authentication is basically the deadbolt for your online accounts.

When enabled, two-factor authentication will automatically send you an alert via a text message, email or third-party app whenever a login attempt is made on one of your online accounts. That message will include a random set of numbers that you ll have to use to log into your app or online account.

For example, if you set up two-factor authentication for Twitter, the next time you log into the app or website from your phone or computer, you ll be directed to a page asking you to enter an authentication number. You ll then receive a text message with

the number. Enter it and you ll be signed into your account. It adds an extra step to your log-in process, but it s the best way to ensure you re the only person who can log into your various online accounts.

As an added benefit, it also lets you know when someone is trying to get into your account without your knowledge by sending you your two-factor credentials when a log-in attempt is made. If you re not the one trying to get into your account, you know someone else definitely is.

If you don t want to give some hacker or other punk easier access to your online accounts, set up two-factor authentication on your email, social and payment services. The extra step of entering a second password can be a bit annoying, but it s well worth the hassle.

And if you re not at least considering two-factor authentication after reading this, you should probably just delete your online accounts and start communicating via handwritten letter or morse code.

Apple Just Renamed One of Its Oldest and Most Important Products

Apple just changed the name of its original operating system for the first time since 1999 on Monday at its annual conference.

Say goodbye to OS X and meet macOS, the new name for Apple s desktop operating system.

 I m talking about the name OS X itself it s been with us for over 15 years, and it s served us so well, Apple SVP Craig Federighi said. But times change, and now the name of the world s most advanced desktop operating system is now MacOS.

macOS has been a key product for Apple since former CEO Steve Jobs returned to the company in 1997, bringing technology from NeXT. In 2001, the first desktop version based on NeXT was released under the name OS X pronounced oh ess ten.

Since then, Apple has released a new version of OS X every year, previously named after big cats, like leopards and cheetahs, and most recently named after scenic locations in California, like Yosemite.

This year s macOS is named Sierra.

But Apple has released and developed several new platforms that have arguably surpassed macOS in importance, especially iOS, the software that makes iPhones run. On Monday, Apple announced the tenth version of iOS.

So to prevent confusion, Apple renamed its oldest operating system. The new name change also brings Apple s desktop brand in line with its other platforms.

The new name won t cause a big change to the way users use their

Macs, but it may take a while for developers and users to get used to saying OS X. But it s still the same stable operating system that Apple s been developing for the past 15 years.

The new MacOS will be a free update, and will become available this fall.

The 5 Biggest Upgrades Coming to macOS Sierra

If your Mac starts talking back to you this fall, it doesn’t mean you should lay off the wine coolers though that probably wouldn’t hurt. It’s actually just Apple’s Siri voice assistant, which will make its way to the company’s Mac and MacBook computers later this year along with a host of other updates to its OS X operating system.

Well, actually, it’s not OS X anymore. Apple has gone ahead and changed the name of its desktop operating system to fit the naming conventions it uses for its iOS and watchOS offerings. OS X is now macOS. Of course, the company is still naming the operating system after a location in California. So this time around the software is called macOS Sierra.

But what’s in a name anyway? You want to know what upgrading means for you. So buckle up, because these are the five best new features of macOS Sierra.

1. Siri on the desktop

Yes, Siri has broken free of its mobile confines and has finally made the leap to the world of Mac. You’ll be able to access the voice assistant by clicking the Siri button in Dock at the bottom of your Mac’s screen. You can then ask the disembodied voice to perform a litany of tasks including searching for files on your computer and looking up nearby movie times.

In a stage demo, Apple’s senior VP of software engineering (and three-time most luxurious hair award winner) Craig Federighi showed how you can call up folders or specific files using Siri. Results are displayed in the top right corner of the screen alongside the Spotlight search magnifying glass icon.

Federighi also demonstrated how you can ask Siri to perform a web search for photos. The voice assistant then displayed the results as it did the native files Federighi had searched for. He was then able to pull them directly from the search results box and place them on his desktop in a snap.

Naturally, Siri will perform all of the same tasks you already don’t use it for on your iPhone. So you’ll be able to message friends, look up sports scores, and make dinner reservations.

A desktop-based voice assistant isn’t a first, though. Microsoft’s Cortana voice assistant has been available as part of its Windows 10 operating system for a year. And while it’s useful, I still feel incredibly awkward sitting in my room asking my computer to do something I can do on my own with a few

keystrokes.

I could, however, see myself using Siri to control my smart home appliances, which it will be able to do when the Home app launches for iOS later this year.

2. Continuity

Both Google and Microsoft already make it relatively easy to access files and software across various devices without much hassle, and now Apple is getting on the bandwagon too. MacOS Sierra will offer a variety of continuity features that let you move files and access features from your Mac on your iPhone and vice versa.

The first change comes by way of iCloud Drive, which in addition to already letting you save and access files in the cloud, will let you see all of the files you have saved on your Mac's desktop on your other Macs and iOS devices. That's especially convenient considering most people have a tendency to simply save their files to their desktop only to realize later they needed to save them to their iCloud Drive to access them on the go.

Apple is also making it a bit easier to use Apple Pay on your laptop or desktop by moving the authentication step to your iOS device. For example, if you're on the checkout page of a website and click the Apple Pay button, you'll automatically get a prompt to use the Touch ID sensor on your iPhone to verify your purchase. This sounds helpful in theory, but I also don't want to have to jump between devices just to buy 52 boxes of Devil Dogs.

Even the most boring task of typing in your Mac's password is getting a continuity upgrade. Now instead of tapping keys to enter a password like some kind of Neanderthal, your Apple Watch can automatically recognize that you're approaching your Mac and unlock it without you ever having to touch a button.

3. Storage optimization

Running out of storage space on your Mac is genuinely annoying. Not only do you have to delete scads of disparate files, you have to make sure you're not accidentally getting rid of important things like photos and documents. And when you're deleting tens of gigabytes of files, that can be an especially time-consuming task.

So Apple is giving macOS Sierra carte blanche to manage your Mac's storage drive with Optimized Storage. Whenever your drive becomes full, macOS will take certain steps to free up some space. For instance, it will automatically delete anything that's been in Trash for more than 30 days and move infrequently used files off of your Mac and into the cloud. It will also remind you to delete old temporary, duplicate and app installer files.

For people who are awful at managing their computer's storage and then fly into an indignant rage when they run out of space, this should prove to be an indispensable feature. My one concern is that when macOS uploads your files to the cloud, you have to redownload them to get them on your desktop. And if you don't

have an internet connection that’s a no go. But most people have internet access readily available while using their Macs, so it shouldn’t be much of an issue.

4. App tabs

I usually write using Microsoft Word, and when I’m working on multiple articles at the same time that means having a bunch of different Word windows open at once. The same happens when I’m editing multiple photos, which ends up becoming a real problem. To address that, Apple is adding tabs to existing first- and third-party apps.

So now when I’ve got three Word windows open, I’ll see them in a single Word window with three tabs; ditto my photo editing app. That’s going to be a huge help, especially for Mac owners who spent 95% of their day shuffling between different windows trying to find the spreadsheet they were just working on.

5. Picture-in-picture

Lastly, macOS Sierra is bringing picture-in-picture viewing to your desktop. That means you’ll be able to watch a video in a moveable, resizable window while still working on your important work project in the background. Just make sure your boss doesn’t catch you watching Game of Thrones in the middle of a budget meeting.

Microsoft Wages War on ’Crapware’ With New Windows 10 Tool

Microsoft yesterday released a free tool for Windows 10 that claims to scrub PCs of the "bloatware" - also called "crapware" - that computer makers pack on new machines.

Refresh Windows, which must be downloaded from Microsoft’s website, currently works only on preview builds of 10, those seeded to participants of the Insider program. Since Insider is a precursor to the production code, the tool should be usable by owners of systems upgraded to the Anniversary Update, version 1607, which is slated to ship next month.

At the moment, the tool can be downloaded via a link embedded in a long message on Microsoft’s support forum; the message appears in Edge after clicking a new link in the Settings panel under the "Update & Security" item’s "Recovery" option.

According to the forum message - which was penned by a Microsoft employee identified only as "Jason" - Refresh Windows downloads and installs a recent, pristine build of Windows 10 on the PC, overwriting the pre-installed version.

More importantly, all non-Microsoft applications that were bundled or already installed on Windows 10 - the exception include the Mail email client and the Edge browser - are eliminated during the refresh. "It will also remove most pre-installed applications such as OEM applications, support applications, and drivers," wrote Jason. The term "OEM" (original equipment manufacturers)

refers to computer makers such as Dell, Hewlett-Packard and Lenovo.

For that reason, Refresh Windows would be best used immediately after purchasing a new Windows 10 system, and before the buyer installed any software on the machine.

Jason ticked off a slew of caveats for Refresh Windows, including some during what he referred to as the "preview period" of testing with Insider members. He implied that it would be added to the production-grade edition of Windows 10.

Users of Refresh Windows may choose to retain their personal files - those stashed in the core folders such as "Pictures" and "Documents" - or wipe everything from the drive. In all cases, they will have to reinstall applications, including Microsoft Office and third-party programs, and probably download and install new device drivers, either through Windows Update or from the individual websites of the PC maker, graphics card manufacturer and the like.

As of Friday, Refresh Windows worked only on Insider build 14342 or later. Microsoft issued build 14342 on May 26, but has followed with several since then, most recently on Thursday with build 14677. Assuming Microsoft follows through, the tool will work with the production code set ship in July.

Windows users have long been able to reach the same result by downloading a clean disk image of Windows, then installing that on a crapware-filled PC. But that approach has been largely used by experienced hands: Refresh Windows still requires much manual work in re-installing deleted apps, but it automates the process somewhat by taking care of the image downloading.

For that reason, it may appeal to a wider audience of Windows 10 users.

Although Refresh Windows will be applauded by customers who have complained about crapware, it’s likely that Microsoft’s hardware partners, who pre-load that content on their devices in a bid for additional revenue, won’t see it as a friendly move. In that way, it’s reminiscent of the adversarial strategy Microsoft has taken at times, such as when it introduced its own Surface line, or by promoting its "Signature" portfolio of PCs, which are billed as free of bloatware.

Plume Wi-Fi Pods Could Boost Your Home Network

So continues the slow march of Wi-Fi mesh networks into the home. We already have the Eero$199.00 at Amazon, the Luma, and soon Ubiquiti’s Amplifi. Not to be outdone, the Plume is also up for pre-order now, and it promises a router-less mesh network that, in theory, should automate many of the annoying configuration complexities that come from linking together multiple access points in a single location.

The Plume which sounds like a large, fuzzy feather is

actually a series of small plug-in pucks, sized almost like nightlights, that you deploy around your house to give you wireless coverage wherever you want it. Unlike a traditional Wi-Fi router/extender combination, the small pucks all work together to ensure that they're connecting to one another in the best possible way. That, presumably, means better speeds for your connected devices.

Instead of using a traditional Wi-Fi router, you just use the pucks. The one you plug into your DSL or cable modem (or fiber gateway, if you're fancy) serves as the primary "hub" for all of them.

"A single router can no longer meet the Wi-Fi demands of most homes today. While the latest generation of multi-router systems improve signal strength, they can choke the overall system capacity and speeds. These unnecessarily expensive products are based on decades-old technology that compounds the issue of a central router and cannot handle the complex variables and loads affecting a Wi-Fi network in a modern connected home," said Plume CEO and co-founder Fahri Diner in a statement.

"We approached the problem from a unique angle. Rather than introducing more routers, we decided to deconstruct the traditional router by leveraging inexpensive and scalable compute power from the cloud. The intent was to give people more Wi-Fi, in more places, on more devices, more of the time all at a more affordable price point."

Plume does seem to be trying to distance itself from the notion of a "traditional" mesh network, in that the company says its devices all use different Wi-Fi bands to connect to one another to alleviate any performance issues that would come from the devices using the same Wi-Fi band. The Plume devices also allegedly "tune" your network to prioritize connections for devices that need it most, and Plume even learns your normal habits to ensure that you always have enough bandwidth to stream your Sunday night Game of Thrones.

"By actively monitoring the home network, as well as the devices connected to it, Plume detects interference and continuously makes decisions to improve signal, speed, and resiliency. For example, the system monitors the UHD TV box in the living room and boosts Wi-Fi capacity there so the 4K stream never loses resolution. Plume also directs mobile devices to seamlessly roam as they move around the home," reads Plume's description.

Each Plume device comes with a gigabit Ethernet port, supports AC1200 speeds, and costs $39 for a pre-order or $49 when the devices launch this fall.

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